United Nations A/CONF.199/16/Add.3

World Summit on Sustainable Development

Johannesburg, South Africa
26 August–4 September 2002

Distr.: General
30 August 2002

Original: English

Agenda item 8
Partnership events

Summaries of the partnership events

Note by the Secretariat

Addendum

Summary of the partnership plenary session on regional implementation

Thursday, 30 August 2002

1. The partnership plenary session on regional implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development opened with brief presentations by the executive secretaries of the regional commissions, addressing the themes of poverty eradication and sustainable development, financing for sustainable development, natural resources and sustainable development, integrating environment and sustainable development into decision-making, and trade, investment and globalization in the context of sustainable development.

2. A panel comprised of representatives of the International Centre for Environment and Development, Amazonian Environment Funds, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Council of Europe and the International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas then made statements. This was followed by an interactive dialogue between representatives of Governments and resource persons from the African Ministerial Conference on Environment, the African Development Bank, the Women, Environment and Development Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Asian Development Bank, the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme, the Palestinian Environment Authority, the Abu Dhabi Environmental Data Initiative, and ministers from Belgium, Georgia and Croatia representing their respective subregions. Gustave Speth, Professor at Yale University and former UNDP Administrator, moderated the session.

Highlights of the discussion

3. Regional implementation has become increasingly important since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Many economic, social and environmental issues, including trade and finance, natural disaster mitigation, integrated river basin management and waste management, are of a transboundary nature and cannot be dealt with at the national level alone. Actions taken at the regional or subregional levels provide a bridge between national realities and global priorities, while also addressing common areas of concern and shared interests associated with geographic proximity, relative homogeneity and shared history. Regional groups give

02-56566 (E) 020902

smaller countries a collective voice and, through regional networks, put them on a more equal footing within the global order.

4. The regional commissions and other regional institutions have strategic advantages in performing a number of functions, including:

- Promoting regional partnerships and regional cooperation through interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral partnerships.
- Providing forums for intersectoral and multi-stakeholder dialogues at the regional level, particularly in preparation for global negotiations and conventions.
- Acting as think tanks and undertaking analyses of transboundary problems related to environment and sustainable development.
- Supporting capacity-building efforts and information exchange at the regional level.
- Monitoring and assessing progress made, including the follow-up to Summit outcomes.

5. Despite these potential roles for regional institutions, it is important to remember that the effectiveness of regional institutions is dependent on the continuous support provided by their respective member States.

6. The following issues were raised in relation to the five themes introduced by the regional commissions:

- Although the need for a regional approach must be further promoted, a clear framework must also be established to ensure that benefits from such an approach reach the people at large. The empowerment of women, indigenous people and other vulnerable groups to take part in policy dialogues and in decision-making is essential in this regard. For example, a newly created women's action agenda in line with the millennium development goals will empower women from each region to monitor actions for implementation.
- The management and equitable use of natural resources pose transboundary challenges that can only be addressed at the regional or subregional levels, through joint and integrated strategies and management of regional ecosystems, river basins and common water systems, regional seas and movement of hazardous substances.
- Sound decision-making requires gathering more accurate data at the local, national and regional levels. The Abu Dhabi environmental data initiative is one example of capacity-building at the regional level for data collection, analysis and dissemination. Building knowledge networks for scientific research and innovation is essential.
- Awareness has increased within the private sector on the importance of sustainable development issues. However, the notion of profits must be addressed for business and industry to become truly committed to undertaking private initiatives towards sustainable development. Markets and profits should be effectively directed to alleviate poverty and attain other millennium development goals through market incentives.

7. Statements were also made regarding issues specific to each region:

- In Africa, stable and high-quality assistance and partnerships are clearly needed to combat poverty, HIV/AIDS, food insecurity and other priority issues. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is a dynamic and promising initiative characterized by African ownership, political commitment and financing, with 15 countries involved in partnership with the rest of the world. It could serve as a development model for other regions.
- An integrated strategy is needed to address the specific needs of the Pacific islands, which can get lost in the greater Asia region. Subregional approaches involving relevant stakeholders should therefore be emphasized in order to increase participation by indigenous people. The question of island vulnerability and related risk management, including natural disaster prevention and mitigation, are important issues for the Pacific as well as the Caribbean and other island regions.
- Respect for human rights, the rule of law, transparency, equality of opportunities and universal access to social services is particularly important for achieving social cohesion in Europe. Strategies set up to promote ecological partnerships in such areas as waste management,

water management, cleaner production and partnerships for new mechanisms for financing are to be endorsed at the Environment for Europe Conference to be held in Kiev in 2003.

- The Latin America and the Caribbean initiative aims to promote sustainable development, adopt effective actions with respect to Summit outcomes, and raise the level of the use of renewable energy to 10 per cent by 2010. A comprehensive network of financial institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean region exists to facilitate the distribution of resources necessary to meet global commitments. Successful subregional sustainable development initiatives have already been undertaken in biodiversity conservation and purchase of carbon credits.

- Regionalization is a relatively new concept in West Asia. The priority concern and prerequisite for sustainable development is the issue of peace, security and conflict resolution. Despite positive efforts, an absence of peace, increasing foreign debt and the limited capacity of academic and research centres have hindered regional progress. However, significant steps have been taken in the direction of regional cooperation and coordination in information- and data-sharing and water management. Meaningful efforts for future regional cooperation are anticipated in areas involving capacity-building; water and soil resources for agriculture; marine pollution in the Mediterranean; coral reef protection in the Gulf States; comparative studies of regional laws and regulatory schemes; joint information and data systems, including satellite mapping; and eliminating weapons of mass destruction.

8. The overall follow-up to the Summit at the regional level should focus on, inter alia, transboundary issues and externalities, regional advocacy and information-sharing, promoting and monitoring regional sustainable development-related strategies, advocacy, awareness-raising and capacity-building.